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Machiavellianism, emotional intelligence and social competence: Are Machiavellians interpersonally skilled?

Machiavellians are usually associated with unusually high interpersonal skills which seem to be vital for effective manipulation of other people. However, the current research has not confirmed such an opinion. The aim of this study was to examine relations between Machiavellianism (Mach) and self-report emotional intelligence (EI as a trait), self-report social competences (SC) and recognizing emotions from facial expressions. Mach was negatively correlated with EI and SC overall result and with subscales of social competences in intimate situations (SC-I) and in situations requiring social exposure (SC-ES). There was no correlation between Mach and recognizing emotions and between Mach and social competences in situations requiring assertiveness (SC-A). Exploratory path analyses showed a direct negative association between Mach and EI, SC-I and SC-ES. Mach predicted indirectly (through mediation of EI) SC-I, SC-ES and SC-A.

Keywords: Machiavellianism, emotional intelligence, social competence, recognizing emotions

Introduction

Machiavellianism (Christie & Geis, 1970; Fehr, Samsom & Paulhus, 1992) is a feature that shows, first of all, in interpersonal contacts. Machiavellians are the people who share a general, negative estimation of others, treat other people instrumentally and who accept manipulation as a means of attaining their own goals. Achieving a personal objective is more important than observing moral rules, even if a Machiavellian accepts such rules. Machiavellians' coolness is shown by their lack of emotional engagement in a relationship and the lack of empathy whilst the excess of cognitive orientation over the emotional orientation means their sensitivity to sensual indicators included in a given situation, and the ability to function effectively in conflict situations. Thanks to such features a Machiavellian is able to fully control a situation – to concentrate on a goal, analyze data, select a strategy in order to fully exploit available resources, and not to be distracted by the presence of a partner or by his own emotions. A lack of scruples and sole concentration on the personal goal in a situation where the partner who is more focused on the relation and its ethical aspects, showing a lesser vigilance and determination in attaining his own aspirations, give a Machiavellian an advantage.

Christie and Geis (1970) thought that Machiavellians not only showed a tendency to manipulate or exploit partners but also that they were more effective in influencing others. At least in some types of situations – where a direct contact with the partner was possible, where the situation was only slightly structuralized, leaving a sufficient leeway for manipulation, and where the partner was occupied with emotions, a Machiavellian would usually win. It was obvious that the effectively manipulating Machiavellian – not the submissive non-Machiavellian – had better interpersonal skills, at least with regards to effective influence over other people. In order to achieve a desired goal, a Machiavellian must correctly evaluate the social situation and the partner and afterwards to appropriately use the right influence strategy.

Do Machiavellians really influence others more effectively? Wilson, Near and Miller (1996) by analyzing the results of research upon Machiavellianism from the evolutionary biology point of view, came to the conclusion that by allowing for deception, a Machiavellian's strategy usually worked in short-term relations but in longer periods when it had been discovered it would cause a retaliation behavior and a break of the contact, not providing further profits. The studies which show a greater effectiveness of Machiavellians in interpersonal situations usually had a nature of laboratory experiments. Therefore, Machiavellians

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would usually outperform others since an interaction with a partner was usually short and one-time only. It is said that a Machiavellian is flexible in his selection of effective manipulation methods, however such flexibility does not have to be connected to correct recognition of a situation, or to the right comprehension of a partner's strengths or weaknesses, or to the right selection of influencing means. In Geis and Levy's experiment (1970), the high Machs, in evaluating the partner's Machiavellianism, assigned to all the participants results close to the average, without any tries to differentiate the results; whilst the low Machs used an idiographic approach. The "flexibility" of Machiavellians is based on their constant repetition of attempts to influence others by subsequent use of all available methods – until achieving success (Grams & Rogers, 1989). For an observing moral rules non-Machiavellian, such behavior is unacceptable.

Both in professional work and in private life, we usually deal with repeatable interactions. There is not much evidence to prove that in social life Machiavellians do better. They are not more efficient, appreciated or satisfied with work employees. Research shows that Machiavellians do not do better at work, even in occupations where – theoretically – their inclinations to manipulate could prove to be useful (Graham, 1996; Siu & Tam, 1995). They are not the desired candidates for managerial posts (House & Howell, 1992; Ashkanasy & Dasborough, 2003; Teven, McCroskey & Richmond, 2006). The effectiveness of Machiavellian leaders, measured by long-term results of their actions has also been denied in recent studies (Bedell, Hunter, Angie & Vert, 2006).

Indirectly, the thesis of Machiavellians' unusual social skills is negated by the results of correlations studies. Machiavellianism is positively correlated with features and dysfunctions of personality that do not support social contacts, such as: neuroticism, (Ramanaich, Byravan & Detwiler, 1994), psychoticism (Allsopp, Eysenck & Eysenck, 1991), psychopathy and narcissism (Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Lee & Ashton, 2005), interpersonal problems (Gurtman, 1992), as well as it is negatively correlated with agreeableness, conscientiousness (Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006) and the tendency to cooperate (Paal & Bereczkei, 2007).

Also research where the direct objective was to evaluate Machiavellians' social skills, does not provide evidence that proves Machiavellians' advantage in this field. The ability to accurately recognize non-verbal messages with regard to emotions can be very useful in choosing a successful method for manipulation. However, in a few studies, the ability to recognize non-verbal emotional indicators was negatively correlated with Machiavellianism (Simon, Francis & Lombardo, 1990; McIllwain, 2003; Draheim, 2004). Christie and Geis (1970) thought that Machiavellians' advantage was not related to the perception of subtle

social indicators. When those indicators were contained in photographs (Christie & Bohem, 1970), Machiavellians did not interpret them any better. When it was expected to identify the person who was lying, there were no differences between people with different levels of Machiavellianism (Geis & Moon, 1981) and non-Machiavellians did better (Christie & Geis, 1970).

Research conducted in psychology indicates a lower social and emotional intelligence of Machiavellians. The studies proved a negative correlation between Machiavellianism and self-report and performance emotional intelligence (Sjöberg 2001; Austin, Farrelly, Black & Moore, 2007), performance social intelligence (Draheim, 2004; Śmieja, 2005), empathy (Watson, Biderman, & Sawrie, 1994; Wastell & Booth, 2003; Draheim, 2004), and positive correlation with alexithymia (Simon, Francis & Lombardo, 1990; Wastell & Booth, 2003; Loas, Verrier & Romney, 2007). The research dedicated to test the relation between Machiavellianism and theory of mental skills indicated that there was a lack of such a relationship in children (Repacholi, Slaughter, Pritchard & Gibbs, 2003) and in adults (Paal & Bereczkei, 2007). Despite relatively repeatable results of empirical research, the researchers still think that the thesis of the lack of unusual interpersonal skills in Machiavellians, is difficult to accept. Paal and Bereczkei (2007) suspect that the emotional mindreading in Machiavellians is impaired, however their cognitive mindreading functions should be above average. Repacholi et al. (2003) think that maybe Machiavellians shall reveal unusual mindreading skills in natural situations where the prize will be to attain a personal goal.

The purpose of the experiment described below was to verify a hypothesis upon Machiavellianism relation with self-reported emotional intelligence and social competence, and to recognize emotions from facial expressions. Following the results of previous research, it was hypothesised that Machiavellianism would correlate negatively with the following: overall emotional intelligence scores, overall social competence scores, and competences in intimate situations as in such conditions the distrust, emotional coldness and egocentrism of Machiavellians make functioning especially difficult. A direction of the supposed relationships between Machiavellianism and competences in situations requiring assertiveness, as well as between Machiavellianism and competences in social exposure situation were unpredictable, so directional hypotheses were not formulated. Even if a non-Machiavellian who is interested in a partner may seem to be more inclined towards non-assertive behaviors, people with low Machiavellianism did not signal any difficulties related to gullibility, naivety or lack of assertiveness (Gurtman, 1992). Having in mind the results of the studies mentioned above, negative correlation between Machiavellianism and the skill to recognize emotions based on facial expressions was expected.

Method

Participants and procedure

There were 173 people participating in the survey, undergraduate university students, 84 males and 89 females, aged 20 – 24, from three different departments of the Silesian University in Poland. Participation in the survey was anonymous and voluntary. The survey was conducted in small groups (about 10 people). The participants completed the following measures: INTE, SIET, SCQ, and two measures of Machiavellianism: Mach IV and Allsopp's scale. The time for providing answers was unlimited.

Materials

Machiavellianism

To measure the level of Machiavellianism, the Mach IV (Christie & Geis, 1970) scale and 10-item, short version of the scale developed by Allsopp et al. (1991) was used. Mach IV contains 20 statements with answers based on a 7-grade scale: from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The level of Machiavellianism (Mach 1) was indicated by the sum of the scored point + 20. Scores on this inventory range between 40 and 160 with low scores representing low Machiavellianism and high scores representing high Machiavellianism. The average based on the results in the sampled group was equal to: $M = 91.7$, $SD = 13.3$ (females $M = 88.6$, $SD = 11$; males $M = 95.0$, $SD = 16.6$). Internal reliability was $\alpha = .75$. 10-item Mach scale includes questions regarding the respondent's own behaviors. Participants indicate their response on a 7-point scale: from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The possible score range is between 10 and 70 ($M = 29.9$, $SD = 11$ (females $M = 27.6$, $SD = 8.6$; males $M = 32.4$, $SD = 12.7$). Higher scores denote higher level of Machiavellianism (Mach 2). Internal reliability in this sample was $\alpha = .79$.

Emotional intelligence

Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (INTE) (Jaworowska & Matczak, 2001) is a Polish version of Schutte's questionnaire, created upon the basis of the three-factor model of emotional intelligence of Salovey and Mayer which includes the skill to notice, evaluate and show emotions, the skill to regulate someone else's and one's own emotions, as well as the ability to use emotions in thinking and acting. It is a one-factor scale, 33 items. The participant evaluates statements by using a 5-grade scale (from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"). The possible score range is between 33 and 165. Validity and reliability of the Polish version of the scale are well documented (Jaworowska et al., 2001). The reliability in this survey was $\alpha = .85$. The average result was: $M = 125.4$, $SD = 15.3$.

Social competence

Social competence is understood as the acquired skills that provide an effective functioning in social contacts, learned during the social training process and shaped on the basis of personality and intellectual features of which the basic ones are: social intelligence and emotional intelligence. Social Competence Questionnaire – SCQ (Matczak, 2001) is a self-report measure in which each person describes his/her own effectiveness grade with regard to performance of certain activities ("How well would you manage, if you were to..."), using a 4-grade scale (very well, quite well, poorly, very badly). The scale is composed of 60 diagnostic items describing activities of a social nature, and 30 non-diagnostic items describing intellectual, technical, motion-sports, manual and "artistic" activities. The overall result (SC), and individual results in three scales: intimate situations behavior (SC-I), social exposure situations behavior (SC-ES) and situations requiring assertive behavior (SC-A) are calculated. Scores (SC) range between 60 and 240 (SC-I between 15 and 60, SC-ES between 18 and 72, SC-A between 17 and 68) with low scores representing low social competences and high scores representing high social competences. Reliability and validity of the scale were confirmed (Matczak, 2001). In this survey the reliability equalled to: SC total: $\alpha = .92$, SC-I: $\alpha = .82$, SC-ES: $\alpha = .87$, SC-A: $\alpha = .83$. The average scores of results in the sampled group were: SC (overall): $M = 138.1$, $SD = 23.3$; SC-I: $M = 42.8$, $SD = 6.9$; SC-ES: $M = 50.4$, $SD = 10.4$; SC-A: $M = 44.8$, $SD = 8.8$.

Recognizing emotions from facial expressions

Emotional intelligence as a skill to interpret emotional information (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2000) requires an accurate recognition of one's own emotional states and to read other people's emotions. This second skill seems to be especially important to a Machiavellian who achieves his goals by means of interpersonal manipulation. The skill to recognize emotions from facial expressions is individually diversified (McCrae, 2000). Emotional Intelligence Scale – Faces (SIET) (Matczak, Piekarska & Studniarek, 2005) measures the ability to perceive other people's emotions. It consists of 18 photographs of faces including 8 positive and 10 negative emotional states shown in 50% by a man and 50% by a woman. Each photograph is accompanied by a set of 6 names of emotions of different signs; each name is treated as a separate position in the test. The respondent decides whether a given emotion is expressed by a face on the photograph, by choosing one of the answers: "expresses", "does not express", "difficult to say". In accordance with the key, the faces express from 1 to 4 emotions, and the maximum result of the test is equal to 108. The reliability and the validity of the SIET are well documented (Matczak

Table 1

Correlations amongst Machiavellianism, emotional intelligence, social competences and recognition of emotions.

Variables	Mach 1	Mach 2	SIET	EI	SC-I	SC-ES	SC-A
Mach 2	.483**						
SIET	.068	.120					
EI	-.383**	-.160*	-.076				
SC-I	-.414**	-.251**	-.038	.610**			
SC-ES	-.214**	-.224**	-.008	.483**	.713**		
SC-A	-.039	.082	-.020	.421**	.646**	.716**	
SC	-.232**	-.204**	-.022	.554**	.857**	.926**	.887**

N = 173. Mach 1 = Machiavellianism - Mach IV; Mach 2 = Machiavellianism - Allsopp's scale;

SIET = recognizing emotions from facial expressions; EI = emotional intelligence; SC = social competences (overall); SC-I = social competences in intimate situations; SC-ES = social competences in social exposure situations; SC-A = social competences in situations requiring assertiveness.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

et al., 2005). The reliability in this survey was $\alpha = .80$. The average result in the sampled group was: $M = 66.9$; $SD = 12.4$.

Results

Correlational analyses

Statistically important differences in results of men and women were observed only in case of Machiavellianism – males scored higher than females (Mach 1: $t = -2.989$, $p = .003$; Mach 2: $t = -2.945$, $p = .004$). Table 1 shows correlations amongst the surveyed variables. Mach 1 and Mach 2 are moderately correlated ($r = .483$). The pattern of correlation between the measures of Machiavellianism and the remaining variables, is identical. Mach 1 and Mach 2 correlate negatively with trait emotional intelligence ($r = -.383$ and $r = -.160$) and competences in intimate situations ($r = -.414$ and $r = -.251$), as well as with competences in situations requiring social exposure ($r = -.214$ and $r = -.224$) and competences – overall result ($r = -.232$ and $r = -.204$). There was a lack of correlation between Machiavellianism and social competences in situations requiring assertiveness, and also between Machiavellianism and recognizing emotions. Emotional intelligence correlates with all subscales and the overall social competences result. No connection was found between recognizing emotions and measures of emotional intelligence and social competences.

Path analyses

Two exploratory path analyses using the Amos 4 software package were performed. Models of paths were formed on the ground of modification indexes; non-significant paths were deleted ($p = .05$). Machiavellianism (Mach 1 in model 1 - measured by Mach IV scale and Mach 2 in model 2 - measured by Allsopp's scale) was treated as an exogenous variable whereas emotional intelligence and social competences were endogenous variables. Recognizing

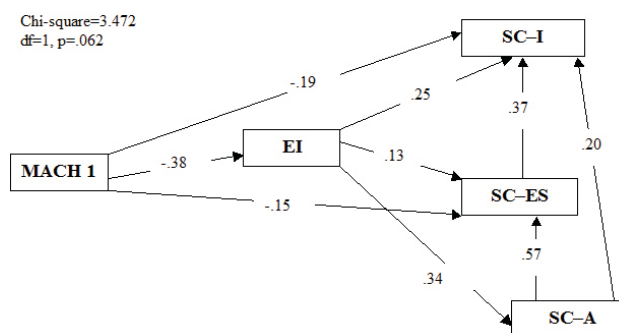


Figure 1. Path analysis, model 1.

N = 173. Mach 1 = Machiavellianism - Mach IV; EI = emotional intelligence; SC-I = social competences in intimate situations; SC-ES = social competences in social exposure situations; SC-A = social competences in situations requiring assertiveness.

emotions from facial expressions was excluded from the analyses because it was not related to the other variables.

Model 1 with standardized path coefficients is illustrated in Figure 1. Only statistically significant paths ($p \leq .05$) are identified. The model provided an adequate fit to the data ($\text{Chi-square} = 3.472$, $df = 1$, $p = .062$, $GFI = .992$, $AGFI = .88$). Machiavellianism predicted directly emotional intelligence ($-.38$), social competences in intimate situations ($-.186$) and social competences in situations requiring social exposure ($-.154$) and indirectly – through mediation of emotional intelligence – competences in the intimate situations ($-.223$), in situations requiring social exposure ($-.123$) and in situations requiring assertiveness ($-.127$). Emotional intelligence predicted social competences directly (SC-I: $.252$, SC-ES: $.135$, SC-A: $.338$) and indirectly (SC-I: $.189$, SC-ES: $.193$). Machiavellianism negatively affected emotional intelligence and social competences. The effect of Machiavellianism on social competences in situations requiring assertiveness was only indirect: Machiavellianism negatively affected SC-A only through its effect on emotional intelligence. In total, the predictors accounted for 56% of the variance in social competences in intimate situations, 46% of the variance in social competences in situations requiring social exposure

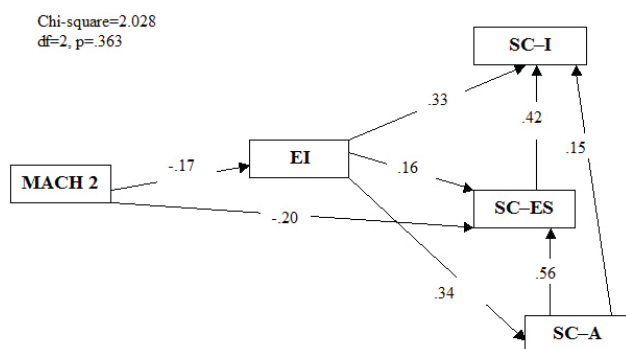


Figure 2. Path analysis, model 2.

$N = 173$. Mach 2 = Machiavellianism – Allsopp's scale; EI = emotional intelligence; SC-I = social competences in intimate situations; SC-ES = social competences in social exposure situations; SC-A = social competences in situations requiring assertiveness.

and 11% of the variance in competences in situations requiring assertiveness. Machiavellianism predicted 14% of emotional intelligence variance.

The model 2 with standardized path coefficients is illustrated in Figure 2. The model fits the data well ($Chi-square=2.028$, $df=2$, $p=.363$, $GFI=.995$, $AGFI=.965$). Machiavellianism was associated directly with emotional intelligence (-.173) and competences in situations requiring social exposure (-.195) and indirectly (via emotional intelligence) with social competences in intimate situations (-.172), in situations requiring social exposure (-.061) and in situations requiring assertiveness (-.058). Emotional intelligence predicted social competences directly (SC-I: .324, SC-ES: .163, SC-A: .338) and indirectly (SC-I: .199, SC-ES: .191). Machiavellianism predicted 3% of emotional intelligence variance. The predictors accounted for 52% of the variance in social competences in intimate situations, 47% of the variance in social competences in situations requiring social exposure and 11% of the variance in competences in situations requiring assertiveness.

Total effects of Machiavellianism on emotional intelligence and social competences were higher when Mach IV scale was used (model 1). Machiavellianism predicted directly social competences in intimate situations in model 1 only. The results suggest, that Mach IV scale is a better measure of Machiavellianism when we want to analyze its relations with emotional intelligence and social competences. Effects of Machiavellianism on SC-A (model 1 and model 2) were indirect only.

Discussion

The results of the study confirm the hypothesis based on the negative correlation between Machiavellianism and self-report emotional intelligence, which is in accordance with the previous findings (Sjöberg, 2001; Austin et al., 2007). However, the hypothesis where Machiavellianism is related to the self-report social competence was confirmed

only partially. Machiavellians of both sexes assessed their social competences in intimate situations as low – that is in accordance with the picture of a Machiavellian as a person who is emotionally alienated, non-empathic, egoistic, so in fact, having a problem with making close relationships (Christie & Geis, 1970; Pilch, 2008). A negative correlation was found between Machiavellianism and assessed social competences in situations that require a social exposure. Within that subscale, the participants assessed how well they would manage such tasks as: making a public speech/lecture, present their own opinion in a discussion, expressing congratulations to someone important in public, or making a toast at an important celebration. Some of those situations entail an unexpressed persuasion purpose which should be easily fulfilled by a Machiavellian. The tasks should be completed in a situation where the subject is observed and assessed by others, and an effective self-presentation is regarded as a Machiavellians' strength (Cherulnik, Way, Ames, & Hutto, 1981). However, the higher the Machiavellianism the lower the assessment rating of those competences.

Correlational analysis indicated a lack of relation between Machiavellianism and social competences in situations that require assertiveness. The questions of that subscale regarded situations in which a person was asking someone to do something, was rejecting someone else's requests, criticized others and accepted being criticized, or was expected to make contact with strangers. Such situations do not require making a close relation with a partner but rather protecting one's own rights. Machiavellians as people highly focused on their own goals and not keen on recognizing the needs of others, should have no problem with those. On the other hand, in the research that diagnosed interpersonal problems, non-Machiavellians also did not report any problems with assertiveness (Gurtman, 1992).

The set-up of correlations, as described above, shows that the relations between Machiavellianism and social competences cannot be assigned to the Machiavellians' tendencies to underestimate their own skills or to easily admit their own weaknesses. Machiavellians see their own limitations in situations where it is necessary to make intimate relations or in situations of social exposure. However, in the case of competences that require assertiveness and the remaining competences described by non-diagnostic statements of SCQ, Machiavellianism is not directly related to the assessment grades.

The exploratory path analysis showed a direct negative association between Machiavellianism and emotional intelligence. People who were more Machiavellian displayed lower levels of emotional intelligence. The Mach IV scale proved a better predictor of emotional intelligence than Allsopp's scale. Machiavellianism directly negatively predicted social competences in intimate situations and in situations requiring social exposure as well as indirectly

negatively predicted – through mediation of emotional intelligence – all types of social competences (thus also competences in situations requiring assertiveness). These results suggest that Machiavellianism may reduce social competences in two different ways: through relevant deficiencies, such as lower empathy (which are reflected in a lower level of emotional intelligence) and irrespective of emotional intelligence. For instance, high-Machs are less interested in developing intimate relationships, so they have fewer opportunities to train these social competences which are useful in intimate situations.

The results of the previous studies showed a negative correlation between Machiavellianism and the ability to recognize non-verbal emotional indicators. The ability of recognizing emotions from facial expressions (SIET) proved to be, despite the suppositions, not related to Machiavellianism. In this survey, the relation between SIET's results and emotional intelligence was not observed even though the ability to recognize emotions of other people is regarded as the foundation of emotional intelligence. However, in the previous studies (Matczak et al., 2005) the relation between SIET and INTE had not been confirmed either, it was explained by the specifics of the measurement (self-report vs. performance) as well as by the dissimilarity of the constructs measured through tests and questionnaires. There was a lack of connections between the ability to recognize emotions and the measure of social competences although the results of some surveys prove that – in relation to other elements of emotional intelligence – the ability to “read” someone else's emotions supports social competences (Denham, McKinley, Couchoud, Holt, 1990).

In light of the above described results, Machiavellians have not proved to be more interpersonally talented. The high Machs in recognizing emotions do not outperform the low Machs, but they are worse with respect to emotional intelligence and social competencies useful in intimate situations and in situations of social exposure. In the survey, two different measures for Machiavellianism were used and they have proved to be moderately correlated. Identical correlation pattern of both Mach scales with all remaining and used in the research tools, constitutes an additional argument in favor of the described relations.

The level of social competences is based not only upon specific abilities but also upon social training that is related to, among others, personality dispositions (Matczak et al., 2005). Machiavellianism as a disposition that, for sure, does not support close, warm and long-lasting relationships among people can be treated as a disposition that hinders acquiring of some social competences. The opinion of the unusual interpersonal skills of Machiavellians, which for many decades has not been questioned, may thus prove to be a myth.

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